

A
DISCOURSE
ON
INFANT BAPTISM.

[PRICE SIX-PENCE.]

IN

D

DISCOUSE

INFANT DARTISM

PRICE 24.00

INFANT BAPTISM STATED AND
DEFENDED.

A
D I S C O U R S E

DELIVERED IN THE
MEETING-HOUSE,
ON THE PAVEMENT, MOORFIELDS,
LONDON;

NOVEMBER 17, 1785:

AT THE BAPTISM OF
THE REV. WILLIAM BENNET'S CHILD:
WITH A PRACTICAL ADDRESS ON THE OCCASION.

By JOHN HORSEY, of NORTHAMPTON.

"Speaking the TRUTH in LOVE."

L O N D O N :

PRINTED BY A. RIVINGTON AND J. MARSHALL:
AND SOLD BY J. BUCKLAND, PATER-NOSTER-ROW,
AND VALLANCE AND CONDER, CHEAPSIDE.

MDCCLXXXVI.

IN THE MATTER OF THE ESTATE OF
JAMES H. HARRIS

OF THE COUNTY OF ...

ON THE ...

AT THE ...

THE ...

WITH A ...

BY JOHN HOSKINS, ...

... the ...

L O N D O N

AND SOLD BY J. HOSKINS, ...

AND ...

The
for
he
Pe
m
an
an
th
of

The following plain Discourse, not designed originally for the Public, is printed at the request of many who heard it. They judged, that Parents and young Persons who approve of the practice here recommended, might receive some advantage by a short and familiar address on the subject. And, should any cast an eye over it, whose sentiments differ from those of the author, he hopes that the stile and spirit of the discourse afford no just ground of offence.

The following plain Discourse, not designed originally
for the People, is now at the request of many who
love it, published in this enlarged and corrected
Edition. It is a Discourse of the Christian's Duty
in this World, and is designed to be a help
to the Soul, and a comfort to the Heart. And I shall
say, that the eye of it, which is the main design
of it, is to show, that the Christian's Duty is
to love God, and to love his Neighbour.

I

A

is
na
im
a
en
qu
fr
m
T
m
ti
ri
fl
fo

A
DISCOURSE
ON
INFANT BAPTISM.

AS the pastor of the society assembling here, appears now in the character of a PARENT, he is disposed to devote his child to God, by the ordinance of christian baptism: and, as a *model* for the imitation of his friends and stated hearers, to do it in a *public* manner. Nothing could reconcile me to engage in this service, but his own immediate request, upon the ground of particular intimacy and friendship: an apology, which I certainly ought to make to my venerable FATHERS and respected BRETHREN in the ministry.

Allow me, then, in the most plain and familiar manner, To state my views of the NATURE of christian baptism—To justify the administration of it to INFANTS—And to vindicate the MODE of administering it, by sprinkling or pouring water on the subject.

B

First.

First. I would state my views of the NATURE of christian baptism.

It appears, indeed, that baptism, or washing with water, was practised as a religious rite, before the commencement of christianity. Our Lord, we know, submitted to it at the hands of John, and significantly observed, that he did it, in order to “ fulfil all righteousness:” in conformity (as critics remark the Greek word *πληρωσαι* signifies) to a custom ALREADY IN USE. It was in obedience to the authority of a divine institution, as his own appeal intimates*; “ The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men ?” And hence, the deputies from the Jewish Sanhedrim expressed no surprise at John’s baptizing, as though the practice itself was NEW or UNPRECEDENTED, but only enquired into the qualifications of the administrator; why dost THOU in particular baptize?—They seem sufficiently acquainted with the CEREMONY ITSELF, by their examining only HIS AUTHORITY to perform it.

“ Diverse washings,” or baptisms, every one knows, were used in the Jewish church †; so that, Christ’s adopting baptism, as the governor of the christian church, was only perpetuating a rite, which had been in practice, and determining its use in the evangelical dispensation.—Thus I think we are to understand his language in Matt. xxviii. 19, 20. It is not the INSTITUTION of baptism, as though it had never been practised before, but the stamping it

* Mark xi. 30.

† Heb. ix. 10.

a CHRISTIAN ordinance, and of UNIVERSAL OBLIGATION. "Go ye," says the risen Jesus to his apostles, "and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you."

Christian baptism thus circumstanced, then, appears to be, A SACRED ORDINANCE, WHEREBY THE SUBJECT IS DEDICATED TO THE GOD OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION, AND REGULARLY SET APART TO THE HONORS AND OBLIGATIONS OF THAT DISPENSATION.—It is the first formal rite enjoined by that religion to which it belongs, and therefore called an ordinance of INITIATION. The subject is dedicated thereby to God, under the distinct characters of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And it farther appears, from the language of the commission, to be the formal badge, or appointed token, of the christian religion, whereby the subjects of it are discriminated or distinguished from others; entitled to the HONORS of the christian dispensation; and obligated to OBEY its rules.—Hence we read of those who were "baptized into Christ," and are therefore said to have "put on Christ:" i. e. they are formally invested with the christian name, and are under the regulations of the christian religion. A person baptized, is thereby regularly set apart, under a determinate name or title. He is, in an external sense, *christianized* or *christened*.—By this ceremony, however, he is not admitted into any

particular church, or religious society; but set apart as a visible subject of Christ's kingdom at large. And farther, this rite by no means ascertains to the subject SPIRITUAL and SAVING blessings; he is hereby marked out, only as a "child of the kingdom;" not, in the highest sense, a *child of God*.

Let us review the commission, and observe, whether it does not agree with this account.—"Go teach," that is, *profelyte* or *disciple*, "all nations,"—how?—"baptizing them;" let that be the form of matriculation into my school; the door of admission into the christian religion—"baptizing them in the name," that is, introducing them to the knowledge, and subjecting them to the authority and protection, "of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost," the one living and true God, most clearly revealed by the christian religion: It follows, "teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." And let it be observed, that the word which is here translated *teaching* (*διδασκαλίας*) is different from what was so rendered before (*μαθητεύσατε*); plainly intimating, that the *same idea* is not intended; but, that the first word means, as I have said, *disciple*, and this properly signifies, *instructing*, like a parent or master, his children or scholars; evidently referring to the subsequent discourses of the apostles, to be delivered, in consequence of their baptism, to those, who had been by that rite admitted into the school of Christ, or discipled to him. Thus were they afterwards, gradually instructed in the grand truths of christianity.

encouraged and fortified by its declarations and promises—and urged to a consistent performance of all its important duties.

Having stated my views of the nature of christian baptism, I am,

Secondly, To justify the administration of it to INFANTS.

We are informed in the history of the Acts of the Apostles, that they baptized ADULT persons; requiring of them, previous to the ceremony, a *profession* of their faith and repentance. And some christians have supposed, that they admitted such ONLY to the ordinance. But I am apprehensive, that sufficient reasons may be given, why their baptizing the adult is distinctly mentioned, in perfect consistency with their baptizing CHILDREN, and a comparative silence respecting them. The case of the Apostles at that period was *peculiar*. I will endeavour to state it with all possible honesty and plainness, and leave you to judge whether it militates against the baptism of our infants.

Observe then,

The Apostles preached a religion which had *never been professed before*. The christian dispensation was not completed, till Christ rose from the dead. Then was he fully invested with his kingly authority, and sent forth his Apostles to preach and to baptize all nations, declaring, “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.” The world, ’till then, were either professedly PAGAN IDOLATERS, wor-

shipping false Deities; or JEWS. There were not, 'tis manifest there *could* not be, any professing the christian religion, before the christian religion was revealed. The Apostles, therefore, went forth, authorized by Christ, to teach a NEW RELIGION; while John, the fore-runner of our Lord, had a little prepared his hearers for it; proclaiming, "the kingdom of God is at hand."

Under these circumstances, then, you see, the persons who attended upon the preaching of the Apostles, had never received christian baptism at all: they *could* not, for the reason just mentioned; the christian religion having never been till then revealed.—Now, Pagan nations had been accustomed to rites, introductory to their own religions. The Jewish people and their children had been introduced into the religion of Moses by circumcision. But the Apostles were commanded to proselyte the Jews, and all other nations, from their *former* professions of religion, into the profession of CHRISTIANITY: and, as they were ordered by their master to do this by *baptizing* them, they consistently administered this ordinance to SUCH CONVERTS upon a profession of their *repentance* and *faith*; that is, renouncing a false or imperfect dispensation of religion, and embracing one that is true, compleat and perpetual: or, in other words, rejecting IDOLATRY and JUDAISM, and receiving the doctrines and laws of CHRISTIANITY. But, who can justifiably infer
from

from hence, that the CHILDREN of these proselytes were *rejected*?

Very similar to this was the case of Abraham, when he was selected from among idolatrous nations, and set apart by God, as the father of the Jewish church. The formal rite by which persons were initiated into that dispensation, was circumcision; and he, as a *proselyte from a different profession*, was circumcised at the age of an *adult* person. But, because HE was circumcised, under those circumstances, at an adult age, are we to infer that his CHILDREN were not, in their *minority*? No: they received the same rite in their INFANCY. And, when that religion was fully established and professed, all the male infants born under that dispensation, as well as adult proselytes still, were enrolled among the faithful, and distinguished as Jews, by the same rite *. “One law shall be to him that is home-born, and unto the stranger that sojourneth among you.”

Had we been informed, that the Apostles baptized persons at an adult age, who were born of BAPTIZED CHRISTIAN parents, the case would have been materially different.—That would have furnished a precedent for doing so now. But there is not a SINGLE INSTANCE of this kind to be met with in the account.—Let me then repeat the thought, to fix it upon the memory; that, though the Apostles baptized persons at an adult age, as recorded in the history of their acts, they were all of them proselyted

* Exod. xii. 49.

from HEATHENISM OF JUDAISM into a NEW, i. e. the *christian* religion; which they had never till then heard, it having never been professed or revealed before.—But, wherein does that affect us?—Christianity is not a new religion now. We have no Proselytes here to make. We are to administer baptism to those, who are descended, not from PAGANS or JEWS, but CHRISTIANS: persons who have received christian baptism themselves.—If we are asked, then, why we do not baptize adult persons as the Apostles did?—the proper answer is, we WILL, when *our* situation is the same as *theirs* then was.—We have no SCRIPTURE EXAMPLE OF PRECEDENT for doing it in OUR CIRCUMSTANCES; since we never read of the Apostles baptizing one at adult age, *after gospel churches were formed, and christianity was fully settled.* But, to proceed more directly to the case of INFANTS.

There appears nothing in the NATURE of the ceremony to exclude them: and, do not the scriptures expressly inform us, that, when the master or head of a family was proselyted and embraced christianity, by professing repentance and faith, the WHOLE HOUSEHOLD were actually baptized, AS THE MEMBERS OF HIS OR HER FAMILY?

In the first place, There is nothing in the NATURE of baptism to exclude infants from its administration.

It cannot surely be exceptionable as an INITIATORY rite. Who can deny, that infants are capable of being *dedicated* to God? And where is the impossibility,

libility, or impropriety, of their being thus formally separated to the honors and obligations of the christian dispensation? This is practicable, and frequently done, respecting *civil* communities; and was formerly, as a *religious* ceremony, we all know, of divine appointment. Jewish children were set apart by circumcision to the honors and obligations of that dispensation. And does not Paul intimate, that christian baptism in this respect succeeds that rite*? What reason so natural and evident for his calling it "the circumcision of Christ," as this, that christian baptism incorporates the subjects of it among those denominated CHRISTIANS, being the badge or token of the christian religion, as circumcision incorporated the subject on whom *that* was performed, among those denominated JEWS, being the badge or token of the Jewish religion? This, if I mistake not, is the scriptural connection between circumcision and baptism; as one positive institute succeeds another: *that* is abolished, *this* retained and perpetuated.

Circumcision, we know, was the regular door of admission into the dispensation of the *Jewish* religion; and we, being baptized, are, as has been hinted, "baptized into Christ," or "have put on Christ;" that is, are regularly admitted into the dispensation of the *christian* religion.—The *circumcised* among the Jews, were consequently entitled to the outward privileges of *that* dispensation; and we, who are now *baptized*, are, in consequence of it, entitled to the outward privileges of the *christian* dispensation.—The rite of

* Col. ii. 11.

circumcision, we all know, was administered to Infants, though *incapable of comprehending* at that time *the intent* of it; why then, should not christian baptism be administered to infants, though no more capable of comprehending its import, than the Jewish infants in the former case?

And, though pious men among the Jews devoted their children to God, without doubt, by *daily prayer*, this did not excuse them from doing it, by the formal rite *circumcision*. And, why should Christians, who in a *similar manner* daily devote their children to God, neglect, on that account, the formal rite *baptism*?—Under the Jewish covenant, (for so the dispensation of that religion was called) if *circumcision* was omitted, it was expressly declared of that subject, by the blessed God, “he hath broken my covenant* ; and wherein is the difference if *baptism* now be omitted, the only introductory rite to christianity?

Circumcision, says Paul, in answer to an enquirer, “hath advantage much every way† ;” chiefly, in that to the Jewish people “were committed the oracles of God;” or, a regular instructive dispensation of religion, announcing him their God, and the God of their seed: that is, the only object of their worship, their king, and benefactor.

Now Brethren consider,

If, when the Jewish religion, to which circumcision belonged, was abolished, and the dispensation of christianity commenced, so important a *change* took place; that infants, who had been used, by a formal

* Gen. xviii. 14.

† Rom. iii. 1, 2.

ite, to be consecrated to God, were to be so no longer—that, though they had formerly been accounted proper subjects of the initiatory ceremony, it was not to be so, under the Gospel—and since, when thus initiated, they enjoyed “advantage much every way:”—If, I say, they were now to be deprived of a regular introduction, and formal claim, to the institutions and honors of the christian religion; how comes it to pass, that this change is not plainly and expressly mentioned?—And how is it to be accounted for, that the Jewish Proselytes to christianity, and even the Apostles themselves, never complained of this hardship?—Does it not evidently appear, that this would have proved an hinderance to their embracing christianity?—Is it not reasonable to expect, that we should have found them remonstrating against this new dispensation of religion, as inferior to the former dispensation by Moses; *that* including their infants, *this* not?—But *do* we find any thing of this in the New Testament?—Not a word, you know, of the kind.—They were a people, by no means disposed to resign any ancient rite or honor, as some other particular cases shewed. Is not their total silence on this head, then, the clearest proof in the world, that the stream of mercy to them and theirs, flowed on in the *ancient channel*?—Thus considered too, as an *ancient* appointment, no FRESH DIRECT COMMAND was needed. But, if the alteration supposed had taken place; if children, formerly admitted, were now *excluded*; where is that ACT OF

EX-

EXCLUSION to be found? And what reason can possibly be given, for their not remonstrating against it?

Does not the conduct of those Jewish Profelytes speak a language like this?—‘ We are convinced upon sufficient evidence, that the christian religion is true and divine. And we relinquish Judaism and embrace christianity. We understand that *Profelytes* are to be admitted to its institutions by a formal rite, *washing* or *baptizing*, while they profess repentance towards God, and faith towards Jesus Christ as Lord of the christian dispensation. All this we approve; and will, with our families, be baptized. For, this is similar to ancient custom. There was a regular form of introduction to the privileges of the *Jewish* religion, now abolished. The only alteration mentioned, is, that the former ceremony, being severe, is exchanged for one easy and familiar. And therefore, agreeably both to our judgment and inclination, we devote ourselves and our children to the GLORIOUS HEAD OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION, with the same readiness, that we and our Forefathers have done to JEHOVAH, ever since the regular institution and settlement of the covenant and church of God.’—

Had they understood the matter otherwise, must they not have been all awake and alive? And how is it conceivable, I again ask, that we should not hear one word of their enquiries, concern, and surprise, at so capital and unwelcome a change?

My Brethren, The expressions of divine authority and mercy appear more consistent and uniform. "The blessing of Abraham is come on the Gentiles through JESUS CHRIST*;" and "we, like Isaac, are the children of promise †."

There is not a word in the New Testament, which intimates an abridgement of our privileges: or, that the christian dispensation of religion is inferior to any preceding. But Paul inform's us, that, the Jewish Church being destroyed, under the figure of "an olive-tree," of which Abraham was the stock, and the people at large the branches, now broken off by unbelief; we Gentiles, "as a wild olive-tree, are grafted *in among them*, and with them partake of the root and fatness of the olive-tree ‡." And, with evident consistency, says the same Apostle, If only *one* Parent be profelyted to Christianity, the children are in consequence of it accounted "holy;" which, he adds, were otherwise "unclean §:" the very distinction which used to subsist between the Jewish people and others ||. They were accounted "nigh unto God," that is, under his immediate protection and government; while others are represented as "afar off;" not entitled to the same honors and advantages. To render the argument conclusive, let me remind you,

SECONDLY, That when the master or head of a family was profelyted, and embraced Christianity, by

* Gal. iii. 14. † ch. iv. 28. ‡ Rom. xi. 16, 17.

§ 1 Cor. vii. 14. || Isai. xxxv. 8, lii. 1. Acts x. 28.

professing repentance and faith, the WHOLE HOUSEHOLD were actually baptized, AS THE MEMBERS OF HIS OR HER FAMILY.

Does not the New Testament expressly assure us, that this was the Apostolic practice?—Thus Paul “baptized the *household* of Stephanas*.” And when Lydia was proselyted by his preaching, she, and her *household*, as the members of her family, were baptized, upon *her personal* profession of Christianity†. Was not the case just similar too, respecting the Philippian Jailor? HE believed, or embraced Christianity (and the Greek word *μετασκευασ* being singular, limits, I think, the believing to *him personally*) upon which, not only he, but “ALL HIS were straightway baptized‡.” So, when Peter addressed his awakened hearers, exhorting them to be baptized, does not he place the argument in the same form?—“Be baptized; for, the promise is to you.” But what is to be done with our CHILDREN?—Why, says he, the promise is to them too§. Now, if, because the divine promise reached the proselyted parents, *they* were to be baptized, and he asserts the same promise equally belonged to their *children*, what should you infer, but, that for the same reason these should be baptized too?—And, says the inspired writer, ’tis binding, not upon you Jews only, but proselyted Gentiles too; those that are afar off, “whom the Lord our God shall call” into the profession of this religion: the promise will respect *them* and *their children*, just as it does *you* and *yours*: all Christians whether

* 1 Cor. i. 16. † Acts xvi. 15. ‡ xvi. 33. § Acts ii. 38, 39.

profelyted, and so brought nigh to God, or *born* under the dispensation, shall be separated to it's honors and obligations by the rite of baptism.

Upon the whole, does it not appear, that, to baptize persons, in our circumstances, at an ADULT age, is without a SCRIPTURAL WARRANT ; without a SINGLE EXAMPLE in the Apostolic practice ; while, to baptize HOUSEHOLDS or families, the parent or head of it being a Christian, is AN EXACT AND LITERAL IMITATION OF THE CONDUCT OF MEN DIVINELY INSPIRED ?

Allow me still to presume on your patient attention, while,

THIRDLY, I vindicate the Mode of administering baptism by SPRINKLING or POURING water on the subject.

And I cannot but think, that very little may suffice for an impartial intelligent hearer, on this part of the subject. The Greek word (*βαπτίζω*) which is used for baptizing, signifies, according to the best Lexicographers and Grammarians, not only to *dip* or *plunge* under water ; but also, to *wash* or *wet* in any form : and is evidently used in the New Testament in reference to religious observances of this sort among the Jews. They practised, says the Apostle *, *διαφορεῖς βαπτισμοὺς*, *different kinds of baptisms* ; religious washings of various sorts, or in different forms. Now, if the inspired Apostle rightly understood this word, and uses it as an equivocal open

* Heb. ix. 10.

term, including different kinds of washing, who can limit it to one particular sense, or mode of application, consistently with an impartial regard to the authority of scripture? Is any thing farther determined than this, that water should be applied to the subject in some form or other?—The mode of use appears to me, to be only the ceremonial part of a positive institute; just as, in the supper of our Lord, the time of day, the number and posture of communicants, the quality and quantity of bread and wine, are circumstances accounted not essential by any party of christians. Yet, in that institution, the quality of the bread, *unleavened*, and the unity of the loaf, *one bread or loaf*, are represented by the Apostle as significant of something *moral* in the receivers: viz. The sincerity of the communicants *, and the unity of the church †. Now, if we paid a strict regard to a single mode of applying water in baptism, while Christians are universally inattentive to those circumstances in the other positive rite, should we not be manifestly inconsistent?—Yea, are there not positive rites, practised by Christ and his Apostles, which Christians, who differ upon this point, agree to alter, and even reject?—Witness, “anointing the sick with oil ‡,” the “holy kiss §,” “washing the feet ||,” and the like.—Thus circumstanced, then, I ask upon what principles, common to the followers

* 1 Cor. v. 8. † 1 Cor. x. 16, 17. ‡ Mark vi. 13.

James v. 14. § Rom. xvi. 16. ¶ 1 Cor. xvi. 20.

|| John xiii. 5. and 14.

of Jesus, could we justify a rigid attachment to any single mode of baptizing?—Are not sprinkling, pouring, and plunging, PERFECTLY EQUIVALENT, EQUALLY VALID?—Besides, if our Lord had designed to confine his followers to a particular mode, exclusive of all others, why did he use an open general term, (βαπτίζω) and not a word decided and limited in its import?—The Greek language would have furnished him with terms indisputably precise and exact*.

However, with regard to the mode of administering baptism by John and Jesus Christ (or rather his disciples †), the probability seems in favor of SPRINKLING OR POURING, not plunging under water. For observe here, the ONLY way in which one person, the Priest, was directed or known to apply baptism to another under the Law, in a figurative sacramental form, as an emblem of purity, was by sprinkling or pouring it on the subject; NEVER by dipping or plunging. 'Tis a practice entirely uncommanded, and unknown throughout the whole history of the Jewish Church, that the Priest should plunge a person in order to his separation or cleansing. We never read of one person's dipping another under the water. Which, then, is the more probable; that John or Jesus Christ, at the commencement of the christian dispensation, administered this rite by plung-

* Of this kind have been reckoned, and I think properly, κατὰ σκευὴν, κατὰ ποσὶν, κατὰ δυνάμιν or κατὰ δύναμιν, not to say διὰ τῆς ὕδατος and βυθίζω.

† John iv. 2.

ing (a practice perfectly UNPRECEDENTED)—or—
by sprinkling or pouring water, a ceremony in
DAILY USE, and of DIVINE APPOINTMENT?—
'Tis true, indeed, that John accommodated the
multitude with a place where there were *many wa-*
ters (ὕδατα πολλὰ *). But, might not this be from
considerations totally distinct from the mode of bap-
tizing?—Will this determine the necessity of im-
mersion?—Surely not.

But, is it not expressly asserted, that many, at the
time of baptizing, went *into*, and came up *out of* the
water? True: but a school-boy knows, that the
Greek particles so rendered, are very frequently
translated only *to* and *from*; and, if so rendered in the
places referred to, the argument for immersion is
proportionably weakened. But, I have no objec-
tion to our translation here. They possibly might
go into the water, and come up out of it; yet does
this prove that the subjects baptized were plunged all
under water? Is not *that* circumstance perfectly dis-
tinct, and entirely undetermined?—But then, why
was a RIVER made use of? Perhaps, for a signifi-
cant reason, stated by the late Rev. Mr. FLEMING †,
to this effect—John was of the order of the Priests;
and begun his public ministrations at thirty years of
age, in conformity to the laws of the Priests. Now,
'tis clear, that the most important baptisms, or reli-
gious applications of water among the Jews, had
been by SPRINKLING or POURING: and, that,

* John iii. 23. † Fleming's Challenge, &c. p. 17—24.

amongst the formalities attending the *water of separation* in particular, the Priest was obliged, by divine command, to regard this circumstance, that it was *running water* *. Now, is it not supposable, that John, thus circumstanced, in his intermediate dispensation, gradually declining from the Jewish System, and imperfectly anticipating the Christian, might pay attention to this circumstance in his manner of using baptismal water?—There appears surely in this account, to say the least of it, nothing forced or unnatural: and, whether the probability be allowed greater or less, there is certainly no proof that John practised immersion. The tale is simply this.—He preached by a river—to a multitude of hearers—in a hot climate—dressed answerably to it—with sandals only on their feet—and their baptism, when they went out to hear him, an uncertainty.—As they hear, they understand, and are baptized; how? *in* or *at* the river Jordan: there is nothing decisive as to the mode. We must be determined in this by the circumstances of the case.

OBSERVE then—

On the one hand, the ceremony was performed in connection with a river; the particle meaning sometimes *at* and sometimes *in*. On the other hand, the number baptized appears to have been great—many of them at a considerable distance from home—unexpectedly awakened—no mention of any change of raiment; which must have taken place if immersion

* Lev. xiv. 5, 6. 50, 51, 52, &c.

was the mode.—On which side, then, lies the probability?—If plunged in their wearing apparel, how exceedingly inconvenient, and even dangerous to health!—It could not be *naked*.—How then? I presume, not by immersion at all; but, that the multitude stood in ranks at the brink, or just within the edge of the river, while the Administrator SPRINKLED or POURED the *running water* upon them.

When too I am informed, that THREE THOUSAND were by Peter's sermon pricked to the heart, and added to the church, being baptized on the *same day*; such a croud of objections start up to view, if I suppose them all *plunged*, as quite staggers my belief,

And farther—Is not the SEVERITY of immersion; under all circumstances, and in all Countries, inconsistent with the mild Genius of the christian religion?—Who can imagine that an introductory rite must be administered in a form harsh and terrifying?—What other christian institute tends to shock our feelings? Christ's "yoke is easy, and his burden light*." His "commandments are not grievous†." He requires "mercy and not sacrifice‡;" and prohibited "putting old wine into new bottles§;" that is, imposing harsh and painful injunctions on young and tender minds.

Besides, is not sprinkling or pouring water on the subject, a mode which best agrees with the form in which the CHIEF BLESSING signified by baptism is promised, viz. The baptism or effusion of the Spirit?

* Mat. xi. 30. † 1 John v. 3. ‡ Mat. ix. 13. § ch. ix. 17.

John prophesied of Christ * “ he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire.” But when, and how was this accomplished? By the Holy Ghost’s descending and sitting upon them in the form of cloven tongues of fire †. ’Tis manifest, they were not PLUNGED in it; but it was POURED DOWN upon their heads. Yet John, (was he right think ye?) calls this, being BAPTIZED therewith. And, from the manner in which he compares this baptism with his, and illustrates the one by the other, is it not apparent that he baptized with water in a *similar* way?—“ I baptize you with water,” said he ‡, “ but one mightier than I cometh, he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire.” q. d. As I baptize with water, by pouring it out upon my Disciples, so shall ye be baptized by the Spirit, when poured down upon you, like cloven tongues of fire.—So, when Peter, and the attending Jews saw that the Holy Ghost, (ἐπεπνεύσθη) “ *fell on,*” (καὶ ἐκχευέσθαι ἐπὶ τὰ ἔθνη,) “ and was *poured out* upon the Gentiles,” “ then remembered I, (says he) the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost §.” —Can any thing be plainer, than that this pouring out of the Spirit which Peter saw, was that baptism with the Spirit of which Christ spake: and of which, baptism with water was an intended emblem or sign? —Does it not appear, that the analogy is entirely

* Luke iii. 16.

† Acts ii. 3.

‡ Luke iii. 16.

§ Acts x. 44, 45. xi. 15, 16.

lost by plunging, but compleatly preserved by pouring water on the subject?—On these, and similar accounts I conclude, that IMMERSION UNDER WATER, is so far from being ESSENTIAL to christian baptism, that SPRINKLING OR POURING water is EQUALLY VALID; yea, MORE SIGNIFICANT; and therefore TO BE PREFERRED.

These thoughts, Brethren, I submit with all possible deference to your candid and impartial attention.—Many other considerations might be produced, and other passages of Scripture cited, farther to illustrate the subject, or confirm what has been advanced; but I omit both lest I should trespass on your time, and fatigue your patience.

Here, after a Prayer, the child was baptized; and the administration of the ordinance was immediately succeeded by the following.

PRACTICAL ADDRESS.

My dear Friend and Brother,

I rejoice that you and your Partner in life, appear in the important capacity of PARENTS; not doubting but you will support that character with the consistency that marks your conduct in every other relation. I am conscious, therefore, that an exhortation from me on the present occasion is needless. I know your views—I know your sensations—I share your joys—and, in some measure, your anxieties too. You look upon
this

this tender babe, and acquire, as it were, a new set of feelings. You observe the humiliating circumstances under which it is born: The imperfections and snares of the world on which it is entered. You anticipate, but with great uncertainty, its future character and lot. Is it "an EMBRIO-ANGEL, or an EMBRIO-FIEND?"—you feel the importance of committing him betimes into the best hands; and the propriety and excellence of *this* institution, as a formal rite, for that purpose.—I will mention for the instruction of other parents, and to quicken our devotion in general, a few particulars distinctly.—I understand you to perform this service,

First. As a thankful acceptance of divine condescension and mercy.

'Is it not decided, say you, by the highest authority, that our infants are included under the Messiah's administration? "Suffer little children to come unto me," is his own language, "and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God*." Did pious Abraham accept the grant under the former constitution of divine truth and mercy? Did the faithful of old uniformly apply the token of it? Let us tread in their steps, and use the christian circumcision, the baptismal water, the only initiatory rite to the kingdom of the *Messiah*, acknowledging and accepting the divine condescension and mercy.'

Secondly, By baptism you surrender and dedicate your child to God.

* Mat. xix. 14.

‘ Yes.—To the adorable JEHOVAH, Father, Son and Spirit, I present, says each of you, this dear Immortal : offering up my most affectionate wishes, and fervent prayers on its behalf. May the FATHER of mercies look down on this helpless infant, and call it his own ! Weak, and almost insignificant as it may appear to uninterested spectators, the parent of the universe hath given it existence. To his disposal I resign it. To his care I entrust it. Should He see fit, in the depths of his Providence, to exercise it with severe affliction, I hope to look on the little sufferer with the patience and composure the gospel requires. Or, should I be called soon to commit his breathless corpse to the silent grave—my God, I dare not murmur—I refer him by this act to thy disposal, without hesitation or reserve. Thou art “ righteous in all thy ways and holy in all thy works.” But, surely, I may hope for his preservation. Interest him in thy patronage, and bless him with health and prosperity !

I recollect, the condescension of the SON of God to little children was peculiarly expressive. Surely his absence from our world has not abated his affection. Compassionate Redeemer, accept this humble offering ! Remember thy reviving declaration now thou art in thy kingdom ! Stretch forth the arms of thy compassion, and take this babe, which a fond parent’s affection and christian duty present for thy merciful acceptance !

‘ Oh

Oh how have I wished, says the devout parent, while this ordinance was administering, that the blessed SPIRIT would accept my dedication; and by his gracious influence form my child anew! I desire—I pray—I hope too; since the baptismal water is an emblem of his purifying sanctifying influences. Oh to have him baptized, not only with water but the Holy Ghost!—He is not a Jew, I know, or a Christian, who is only outwardly so; neither is that the true spiritual circumcision or baptism, which is merely external in the flesh*. But, thus, my child is regularly admitted to those christian ordinances, through which the Spirit, and every other blessing, are sovereignly and graciously bestowed. Lord accept the surrender, and gratify the wish of the pious parents!

Thirdly, This ordinance farther imports, (and I am sure you consider it so) an obligation to future services and duties.

Happy would it be, if all christian parents thus thought and thus acted; if they considered the baptism of their children, as the beginning of a series of services. And 'tis doubtless becoming, that you, my Brother, standing in a public capacity, should, by performing this service in a public manner, and by the uniformity of future conduct, set an example to your congregation. Children devoted to God by baptism, should certainly be trained up for him. Were this the case, we should find more families

* Rom. ii. 28.

than we do, illustrating the wise man's remark ;
 " Train up a child in the way he should go ; and
 when he is old he will not depart from it *."

You will not think, that, when you have baptized
 your child, you have discharged the whole, or the
 chief part of your duty to him : but consider it as a
 virtual obligation to future services.

You will teach your child, should God spare his
 life, the great principles of our holy religion. And,
 that he may derive his sentiments from the purest
 source, will instruct him early to read the Bible.

You will endeavour soon to impress his mind with
 a sense of GOD, CHRIST and ETERNITY ; and of
 the various other interesting truths immediately re-
 sulting thence.

You will observe, and check betimes, the irregu-
 lar passions he discovers ; and, by a prudent mixture
 of authority and kindness, lead him into the paths of
 religious duty and entertainment.

It will be your serious concern, to convince
 him, that the welfare of the soul is the " one thing
 needful : " that wisdom's " ways are ways of plea-
 santness and all her paths are peace : " and, by every
 rational and scriptural motive, prompt him to fear
 and love and serve his Creator.

You will aim to enforce instructions by EXAM-
 PLE : and, as children imperceptibly imitate their
 Parents, see to it, that he has something *worthy of*
imitation. And, since the success of the most lau-

* Prov. xxii. 6.

dable efforts depends upon the divine blessings, you will frequently and fervently address the throne of mercy, praying for and with your family. And, in the name of my dear friends, in the name of this dear babe, who is unable to plead his own cause, I ask the affectionate prayers of all this assembly, that such efforts may not be in vain.

And happy indeed shall I be, if the hints now suggested, prove the means of exciting ALL PARENTS present to an active and consistent discharge of their very important trust.

Many YOUNG persons who hear me, have been by baptism devoted to God in their infancy. I cannot help dropping a word or two for their instruction and improvement.

Seriously examine the grounds of this practice. Consider the privileges it includes, and the duties resulting from it. Don't hastily despise, or undervalue, what your parents have conscientiously practised. Attend, when you have opportunity, the baptism of others; that your judgments may be increasingly informed, and your resolutions for God and duty confirmed. But, while you are steadfast in your attachment to what appears scriptural, in this and other points of doctrine and practice, do not be bigotted and censorious. Hold, and "speak the truth in love." Never rest in the externals of religion, but see to it, that your hearts are right with God. And, having been thus devoted in your infancy to the most High, seriously partake of the

SUP-

SUPPER OF THE LORD, as a succeeding rite for your confirmation and improvement. Your baptism was the act of your parents: to communicate at the Lord's table is your own. Examine your motives, temper, and prospects; "so eat of that bread, drink of that cup," and "join yourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant never to be forgotten."

To conclude. Let us all "pray for the peace of Jerusalem," and for the propagation of religious truth. And may "our sons be as plants grown up in their youth; and our daughters as corner-stones polished after the similitude of a palace!"

Amen.

F I N I S.

your
n was
t the
tives,
drink
d in a

ce of
gious
n up
ones

n.